NETWORK A MEETING RECORD

Network A Plenary Meeting
June 21-23, 1994, Washington, DC

Participants

Friedrich Plank (Austria)
Aletta Grisay (Belgium)
Luc Van de Poele (Belgium)
Douglas Hodgkinson (Canada)
Ann Savant (France)
Kimmo Leimu (Finland)
Dieter Schwedt (Germany)
Thomas Kellaghan (Ireland)
Chiara Croce (Italy)
Gerbo Korevaar (Netherlands)
Jules Peschar (Netherlands)
Rosemary Renwick (New Zealand)
Marit Granheim (Norway)
Gertrudes Amaro (Portual)
Guillermo Gil (Spain)
Sten Petersson (Sweden)
Uri Trier (Switzerland)
Mark Neale (United Kingdom)
Jay Moskowitz (United States)
Eugene Owen (United States)

Norberto Bottani (OECD/CERI)
Albert Tuijnman (OECD/CERI)

Observers

Erich Svecnik (Austria)
Monique Bélanger (Canada)
Lucio Pusci (Italy)
Dawn Nelson (United States)
Gary Phillips (United States)

Regrets

Rubi Cardel-Gertsen (Denmark)
Henrik Bulow (CE)

Objectives

The meeting was chaired by Eugene Owen. The Agenda was approved with the following items:

- Revision and approval of EAG3 Indicators

- Discussion of the NwA Volume

- Discussion of the Strategic Plan

- Presentation of the Item-Banking Study

- GOALS Report

- CCC Report

- Discussion of the INES Standards

Project Update

Norberto Bottani of CERI began the meeting with a presentation of recent OECD and INES activities. The meeting of Ministers in June brought about a work plan, in which all participating countries agree that developing indicators was their first priority in studying education policies. At the PRAG meeting in April presentations began on a framework for the indicators as well as technical standards to improve their statistical quality. These documents will be discussed at the Education Committee meeting next year. At a meeting of the National Coordinators in London, several countries thought that expanding the indicators would be politically risky and deplete the financial resources of those countries involved in collecting data. The next General Assembly meeting in Finland will have to define a new strategy which balances additional indicators with political priorities, and which prepares for after the INES project ends in 1996.

EAG 3 Indicators

Aletta Grisay led the discussion on Reading Literacy Indicators.

<u>Interest in Reading</u>

Aletta expressed some suspicions about the quality of the data for some countries and also noted that the standard error measures were questionable. This led to a general discussion where to place statistically technical information, and the way that it is best presented to the EAG3 audience. Among the suggestions: placing this information in the annex; in the text; adding a graph or chart to help interpret the data; footnoting a rule or formula that the reader could use, with more complex explanations in the annex. Concerns over gender differences, reading subject matter, its usefulness to policymakers, the validity of the IEA data, and the accuracy of student self-reporting were all expressed. In the end the Network decided (1) to rename the indicator; (2) to develop several versions to circulate; (3) to proceed with publishing an indicator using this data.

<u>Home / School Language Differences</u>

Many of the same concerns of validity expressed in the Interest in Reading Indicator were also expressed over this indicator. Specifically, the inadequate sample size, its relevance to policymakers, and the quality of the IEA survey questions and IEA data were noted. The debate centered around the argument that policymakers could use this indicator to set policies similar to those countries whose language minorities achieve at high levels. However, it was argued, this ignores the unique situation of the various language minorities in each country. Albert Tuijnman suggested that this indicator may be too politically sensitive for EAG3, but the issue could be included in the NwA Volume where it could be explored in-depth. The group decided that while this indicator was interesting, it should not be included in EAG3. The group also agreed that other studies should be consulted on this and other indicators. TIMSS was mentioned as a possibility.

Five Year Reading Progress

Concerns over inherent problems in the research design used by this indicator led to a debate over whether to use age or grade as the basic unit of measurement, and how this data should be organized. Aletta Grisay explained that the scores of those students with less than a five year difference were multiplied, and those with over five years were divided to approximate the equivalent of a five year time period between the two tests. Further discussion over the placement of statistical information raised the question of whether to include EAG2 data in EAG3. The members agreed that the indicator should be kept with a name change and a removal of the term "progress", and that if EAG2 data is used as a reference, the reader should be alerted to it. They also agreed that EAG2 data should only provided a context for EAG3, and that the data should not simply be repeated but presented in a new way.

Computers in Education

Albert Tuijnman led the discussion of three core indicators using data from the IEA Computers in Education Survey. On a positive note, Albert mentioned that these indicators provided the Network and the ability to provide EAG with continuity by publishing indicators comparable to EAG1 and EAG2 with a new data source. However, few countries are represented in the study and variability of sampling within countries led to data quality concerns. With the exception of Austria, the countries in the sample expressed doubt about publishing the indicator in its present state.

Friedrich Plank agreed that the indicator was problematic. However, he expressed the desire to have recognition of Austria's participation in the survey. This would have been the first Network A indicator to have data for Austria. The Network decided against publishing. Information on this indicator will be included in the General Assembly report.

Summary

The two indicators that will be kept are the five year reading comparison and the amount of reading. The Mother Language and the Home/School effect require further development. The relationship between NwA, IEA, and TIMSS should be further investigated.

Strategy

Eugene began the discussion of the Network strategy by laying out 4 general principles:

- Think very long term – at least 10-15 years

- Need regular, periodic source of data

- Consider a) ways to improve countries internal data collection capacity; and b) influence other organizations as source of data collection and analysis

- Think of project, not just Network A needs

Douglas Hodgkinson presented highlights from the draft "Toward a Strategic Approach". Douglas noted several conditions that need to be met by the strategic plan in order for NwA to be effective. That it must limit its scope to issues that it can affect, that NwA plans must be suject to a bi-annual review to meet the rapid rate of change in education systems, that any statistical measures must be comparable over time and across jurisdictions, and that the audience for EAG must be better identified.

Mark Neale's paper recommended robust and regular measures of achievement in each core subject, beginning with the first years of schooling. The link between educational achievement and the economy must also be explored. This information can be obtained by influencing other organizations, or through the OECD itself.

In his discussion on strategy, Norberto Bottani recommended that NwA work to improve the ability of countries to produce their own data, or use the resources within these countries that already exists; that NwA utilize other institution for NwA's data needs, as political institutions are not fulfilling them; and that the NwA must be more specific in terms of the information they want to acquire. Norberto explained that a document will be produced shortly that addresses these strategic concerns and proposes a cohesive system of information on education indicators to the OECD Secretariat.

During the remainder of this discussion, the members voiced their concerns on the following strategic issues: defining the EAG audience more sharply; the decision of what indicators are policy-relevant; the quality of data used and the circumstances of using data from IEA, member governments or OECD.

Douglas Hodgkinson suggested creating an additional subgroup to define the information needs of NwA and utilize the linkages among member governments to obtain it.

Uri Trier suggested that the Network prepare an options paper similar to the PRAG Data Strategy Paper laying out options for subject coverage, frequency, explanatory data, ages, ways of data collection, etc.

A portion of the discussion was devoted to revisiting prior Network discussions regarding the utility of IEA data for indicator development and the relationship between the Network and IEA.

Item Banking Study

Anne Savant of France presented the results of the survey on national assessment plans. Most countries participated and the results show how many countries have implemented national assessments since the first survey.

Some members noted that they could not participate in this study because they do not conduct national exams, and others believed that their national exams would not meet the needs of this study. Topics discussed included clarifying some of the terminology used in the survey, the fact that the age or grade of the students who take a national exam differs across countries depending

on when their compulsory education is completed, and the possibility of linking national and international exams.

Eugene Owen suggested that France prepare a report on the results and trends for presentation at the General Assembly meeting next spring. In addition, he suggested creating a subgroup to provide an in-depth examination of this topic, and to take this effort forward into a more regular assessment. Most countries expressed interest in participating in a subgroup. A sub-subgroup will have an organizing meeting this fall for the purpose of drafting a work statement.

GOALS Report

Marit Granheim reported on results of the GOALS pilot study. This study addressed questions concerning the possibility of describing these goals, where they are formulated in the education system, and where the evaluation of these goals occurs. The areas of the instrument that the subgroup found to be problematic were its terminology, its instructions on completion, and its definition of certain concepts. While these problems are currently being solved, Marit believes that a shifting paradigm in educational systems has led to a lack of language with which these issues can be clearly discussed. She recommended that the results of the revised study be postponed from EAG3 to EAG4 in 1996. The future schedule of the GOALS project is as follows:

- The next pilot survey will be sent to subgroup members on September 16th

- The GOALS group will meet in Oslo on October 20th and 21st

- A field test will be conducted in Norway in January 1995

- The results of the study results will be discussed at the March meeting in Sicily

Albert Tuijnman expressed that PRAG was very interested in the results of the next pilot and that if its data quality is good, a full scale data collection will be discussed in the spring.

Eugene Owen suggested that the GOALS and CCC subgroups combine some aspects of their studies.

CCC Report

After reviewing the objectives and framework of the CCC Report, Jules Peschar noted that the main challenge faced by the subgroup is acquiring data in the four domains. The short term goals of the subgroup are to determine the feasibility of conducting studies of cross-curriculum competencies.

The remainder of the discussion focused on the feasibility of using data from the International Adult Literacy Survey, which will be published in September of 1995; whether there is an overlap in the skills found in the domains and certain curricular areas taught in school; and the

need to proceed with developing high quality data collection instruments. At the time of the presentation, the next steps for CCC were being finalized. A fall meeting is anticipated.

INES Standards

Albert Tuijnman gave a brief presentation of the INES paper on standards of data quality. His goal is to include this paper as an annex to the technical manual. He explained that the content is only to be considered a guideline, and invited the U.S. and the National Coordinators of the members countries to review it.

Network Volume

During this discussion several suggestions were made regarding the content and the organization of the volume. Minor revisions were requested for Chapters 3, 4, 7, and 8, and major revisions were requested for Chapter 11. The members agreed to omit Chapter 9 from the final version, and also agreed to indicate that Chapters 5 and 10 were commissioned papers, and that their content may not be directly related to the objectives of NwA.

The sections of the volume that remain to be written are a section of the new indicators, which Aletta Grisay will author; abstracts for each chapter; and editions of each chapter's executive summary in other languages. The deadline for these revisions and additions is July 31.

Meeting Dates

The next Network meeting is tentatively scheduled for the week of March 13th in Sicily.

Summary

Eugene Owen concluded the meeting with the following summary:

- The Reading Literacy Indicator was placed into context and adopted.
- There was a productive discussion of the Item Banking Study.
- The addition of a third subgroup to deal with strategic issues was accepted.
- Each subgroup should include strategic issues in future discussions.